

## ***Don't Give Up!***

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### **Gathering**

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*Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.*

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **green cloth** or scarf to signify that we are moving into "ordinary time".*

*Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

#### **Light Candle**

We light the candle - focussing our attention, allowing ourselves to be drawn to its flame.

The writer of the gospel attributed to John says:

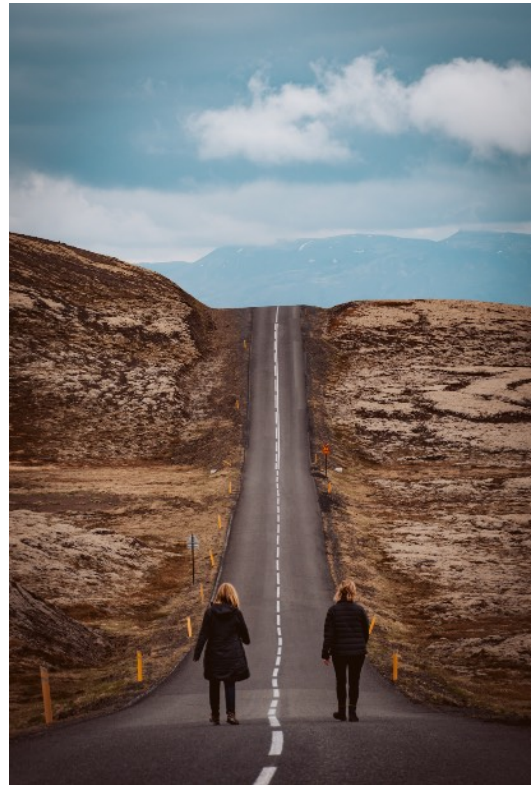
Jesus spoke to them, saying,  
"I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

*John 8:12*

#### **Acknowledgement of Country**

As we begin, we recognise that today is the start of NAIDOC Week - a celebration of the First Nations of this land. And so we acknowledge their sovereignty of land we share and we pray:



*Photo by [Rod Long](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

The Ancient of Days, breathed life into this Land and her Peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have blessed this place through their care and concern.

From river to ocean  
from campfire to hearth

***may the First Nations who have cared for this land be blessed.***

From breath to song  
from step to dance

***may those who follow your Songlines  
guide us on the journey to living honourably in this place.***

From greeting to Amen  
from silence to chorus

***may our worship join with the voices of the First Nations of this Land.***

*(c) 2017, A.Koh-Butler*

## Call to Worship

Psalm 30:

<sup>4</sup> Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones,  
and give thanks to his holy name.

<sup>5</sup> For his anger is but for a moment;  
his favour is for a lifetime.

Weeping may linger for the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.

Holy One we come to you, for we need healing.

We come to you, for we need teaching.

We come to you, for we need leading.

As we gather; as we sing; as we pray; as we listen; as we speak:

May we open ourselves to your balm, your blessing, your word. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 3 July 2022, p.52*

## Sing - 10,000 Reasons (Myrin and Redman)

*As Psalm 30 calls us to sing our praises to God, let's stand and sing...*

*Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul,  
Worship His holy name.*

*Sing like never before, O my soul,  
I'll worship Your holy name.*

The sun comes up it's a new day dawning

It's time to sing Your song again

Whatever may pass and whatever lies  
before me

Let me be singing when the evening  
comes

*Bless the Lord O my soul...*

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger  
Your name is great and Your heart is kind  
For all Your goodness I will keep on  
singing

Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

*Bless the Lord O my soul...*

And on that day when my strength is failing  
The end draws near and my time has  
come

Still my soul will sing Your praise unending

Ten thousand years and then forevermore

*Bless the Lord O my soul...*

*CCLI Song # 6016351*

*Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman*

*© 2011 Atlas Mountain Songs (Admin. by SHOUT! Music Publishing Australia)*

## Prayer

God of constant love,

God of unending grace,

God of the outcast and the prisoner,

God of the powerful and powerless,

God of all,

we join in worship in this moment,

giving thanks for your presence in our lives and for all that you have done,

and what you have made us to be.

God who supports,

God who challenges,

God who sees our whole selves, not just that which others see,

Speak to us today,  
shine the light of your wisdom into our lives  
and guide us towards service of you, each other, and the whole world.

God in the good times,  
God in the bad times,  
God in every pain and in every triumph,  
we bring to you our confession that we do not always live up to your hopes for us,  
or to our own abilities.  
In silence we each bring to you our own prayers.

*Silence*

Though the challenges of life and of faith may be great,  
we come to you assured of your forgiveness, grace and love.  
And so, with confidence and thanks in our hearts we pray in Jesus' name and for his sake.  
Amen.

*Spill the Beans, Issue 43, Resources for 3 July 2022, p.35*

**Listen:** The Peace Of The Earth (Seasons 9-36)

The peace of the earth be with you,  
the peace of the heavens too;  
the peace of the rivers be with you,  
the peace of the oceans too.  
Deep peace, falling over you;  
God's peace, growing in you.

*Words: Guatemalan traditional  
Trans: Christine Carson  
Music: Guatemalan traditional  
Arr: John L. Bell*

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### Listening for God's Voice

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**Reading:** Galatians 6:7-16

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. <sup>8</sup>If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. <sup>9</sup>So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup>So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

<sup>11</sup> See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! <sup>12</sup>It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup>Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. <sup>14</sup>May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. <sup>15</sup>For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! <sup>16</sup>As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

**Reading:** Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup>He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out

labourers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup>Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup>Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. <sup>5</sup>Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" <sup>6</sup>And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. <sup>7</sup>Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. <sup>8</sup>Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup>cure the sick who are there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." <sup>10</sup>But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup>"Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near." <sup>12</sup>I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

<sup>16</sup> 'Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.'

<sup>17</sup> The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' <sup>18</sup>He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. <sup>19</sup>See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. <sup>20</sup>Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'

For the Word of God in Scripture,  
for the Word of God among us,  
for the Word of God within us,  
***Thanks be to God!***

## **Reflection**

Faithful God, open our hearts and minds to notice the prompting of your Spirit.  
Give us courage to align our lives with your way for all Creation.  
And open our mouths to proclaim the wonders of your way here in our midst. Amen.

This week, the Australian Bureau of Statistics released the first bundle of data from last year's census. The media seized on the numbers telling us that, for the first time in our history, the number of people who call themselves Christian in Australia has fallen below 50% (43.9%).

And the number of people who identified as "no religion" rose to 38.9% (up from 30.1% in 2016).<sup>1</sup>

What worries me is that I have already heard the cry go up from some parts of the church, "O woe is us"! Even more troubling are the voices who say they can now claim "minority status" and who will seek to use these numbers to strengthen their arm in demands for protection against discrimination.

I am not going to go into the statistical analysis here - whilst I love that stuff - my brief attempt to navigate the ABS website, to access the tables led me down enough of a rabbit hole for me to find myself lost in the ABS website and none-the-wiser - an adventure for another day, perhaps.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-28/census-2021-data-shows-a-changed-australia/101177152>

And I am sure that over the coming weeks and months, there will be many who give an opinion as to the meaning of these new numbers. It is enough here to say that recent research also suggests that the “no religion” group is not closed to conversations about faith, and many of that group describe themselves as “spiritual” and open to the conversation about who God is.

So before we join in the chorus of woe, I want us to stop and breathe and take some time to consider...

And before we get buried or swept up in the numbers, maybe it is a good time to hear again of Jesus sending the 70 (or 72) into the world to proclaim God’s kingdom.

First the number - 70 or 72 - the various ancient texts are split almost 50/50 on that.

Perhaps 70 or 72 is a symbolic number.

But let me ask this, whatever the number, it was either a large team, or a drop in the ocean compared to the number of villages and towns they needed to visit - depends on how you look at it, doesn’t it?

Perhaps we could ask ourselves, what might happen if we split into pairs and went intentionally into the streets of our town and told whoever we met - what? What would we say?

The easy answer is, “we would tell them about Jesus!”

But that is not what Jesus sent his friends to do - look carefully and they are told to:

- offer peace (10:5)

- share meals with those who welcome you (10:8)

- and then to cure the sick - now it seems to be getting a bit harder - and to say, “The kingdom of God has come near to you” (10:9)

They were not establishing rules or doctrines, but proclaiming, through their words and actions, a way of being in the world; a way of being in the world that even then was radically counter-cultural. Because this way of being (this kingdom) was not about power and control - but about peace and healing.

It didn’t depend on money or strength - it came into the midst of what is, vulnerable and fragile, seeking out places of hospitality.

It doesn’t come into being through some magical act or superpower, but through the commitment of each member of the community to live and relate to one another in ways that are healing and live-giving.

One commentator puts it like this:

By going on a road less travelled, one where we travel into the world with vulnerability and fragility, armed with only a message, is always going to be the harder way. But this tells us that it is the message itself that must speak. It is the ability to liberate and bring life that needs to speak, not a show of power. And that is harder, there is more invested in that message. In fact, everything of ourselves must be invested in that message.<sup>2</sup>

But we don’t need to do it all alone. Jesus sends out his disciples in twos - to support each other. To do that, they need to learn to trust each other. And they need to learn that the good news of God’s way for the world is not heard by force but by persuasion founded on relationships of mutual trust and care.

Who is your partner in ministry?

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<sup>2</sup> *Spill The Beans, Issue 43, Resources for 3 July 2022, p.32*

If you don't have a partner or small group that you can trust, how can we help you build a group together?

Apart from teaching us to live simply, travel lightly and to share peace and healing, this story also reminds us that Christian faith is not about the abilities of any one individual - but about a community that has been built to support each other; that does not need to wield power but simply has a message to share - a message that is shared both in words, and in the way it is embodied in our living - and that's what God's way, God's kingdom, is all about.

In his letter to the church at Galatia, Paul encourages us to not give up (6:9), and to continue to work for the good of all (6:10). Again, he reminds us that God's acceptance does not depend on obeying a set of rules, rather it is the death of Jesus that enables the new creation God is bringing about (6:14-15).

When we hear figures like those from the ABS Census of falling affiliation to the faith we are committed to, perhaps it is tempting to withdraw, to give up.

But we have to acknowledge that for far too long the church has expected its place in society. We have shouted our demands into the world (in many places, we are still trying that approach) - but the world has stopped listening.

We have tried to set the rules and we have demanded obedience to them, we have even used fear to enforce them - but the world has stopped complying.

We have been like the people Paul calls out, the "circumcised [who] do not themselves obey the law" (6:13) - that is, we have demanded compliance with rules we don't keep ourselves.

So perhaps, just perhaps, before we moan about the decline of the church, it is time to go back to basics - to Jesus - to learn again to travel light, to allow ourselves to be vulnerable, to trust our companions on the way and to simply offer peace and healing to a world that is conflicted and broken.

Perhaps we don't need the latest mission program or evangelistic tool - we just need to get into our streets and meet people, eat with them, share life in all its gore and glory, hold hope, and show by our living that there is a different way to be.

Not everyone will accept us - not everyone will want to hear a message that is a radical re-shaping of how we expect the world to work - so we move on.

But in our not giving up, in continuing to work for the good of all, God's way is made known, the kingdom is realised, and we get to celebrate the wonder of God's vision embodied in our community.

Let's pray,

God you call each one of us to set out into your world to love people into your way of being.

Give us courage to leave behind our accumulated baggage and to trust our fellow travellers.

Go before us as we share meals and offer peace into our hurting world.

Give us wisdom to know when to move on.

May all that we say and do point always towards your eternal grace. Amen.

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## Responding

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### **Sing** - Thuma Mina (TIS 749)

Thuma mina, thuma mina,  
thuma mina, Somandla.

Fill me, Jesus; fill me, Jesus;  
fill me, Jesus; fill me, Lord.

Send me, Jesus; send me, Jesus;  
send me, Jesus; send me, Lord.

I will go, Lord; I will go, Lord;  
in your name, Lord; I will go.

Lead me, Jesus; lead me, Jesus;  
lead me, Jesus; lead me, Lord.

*From South Africa  
arr Anders Nyberg*

### **Prayer for Others** - Narelle Dempster

Lord we come before you with thanks for your constant love and unwavering faithfulness that we experience everyday. Yet our hearts also break for the many people, places and situations that are struggling with life and are in desperate need of change. So we come before you with confidence that when we share our concerns with you, we will find your mercy and grace in our time of need.

Loving God, we pray for your world today as it continues to face seemingly insurmountable challenges, around climate change, war, inequality, poverty, and disease. As our country and community continue to be plagued with problems and struggles, we pray for all those on the edges and the margins; the poor, the homeless, the despised, the excluded, the grieving and the broken.

We continue to recognise the challenges we face in building strong and authentic relationship with First Nations peoples of this land. We're thankful for our new government's commitment to authentic reconciliation and to finding a way to give expression to the Uluru Statement of the Heart with compassion and integrity. In acknowledging the tragedies of our past, we humbly seek a new way that honours the place of First Nations people in this land, and to live in ways that honours the contributions we all bring to our communities.

As we think of our church family, we bring before you those who are unwell, lonely, recovering from surgery or struggling with bodies that can't do what they once did. We think of all those you lay on our hearts in need of healing and comfort  
*Silence*

Lord, you give us so many opportunities to reach out and connect with our community and our families to share your story of love, of grace and of hope. So we ask for your help to make this happen and see lives change. Keep us humble and teachable, alert to your leading and to the needs of others around us, always

In Jesus name we pray  
Amen.

## Offering

*As we make our offering, this is not just about the money we give - this time is also an opportunity to consider what time, skills and commitment we make to the work of God in the world...*

Holy God, your generosity to us calls out of us a response:

In this place and in these plates, we offer a portion of our treasure, our talents, our time...even our very selves.

Please bless our offerings.

Use them to further your work among us, our community, and our world. Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 3 July 2022, p.54*

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## Sending

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### Sing - One Body In Christ (Seasons 8-23)

*One Body in Christ  
called to share the Good News with the  
world.*

*Each of us gifted,  
made in God's image,  
we have a story to tell,  
a story of love.*

We have been baptised in Christ,  
the love of our God  
poured into our hearts.  
Called to share the mission of Christ,  
the Spirit of God alive in our hearts;

to be a light of welcome  
in the darkness of exclusion,  
an out-stretched hand of love to ev'ryone.  
*We are one body in Christ...*

To give voice to the voiceless,  
the unheard in the wilderness,  
an outstretched hand of love to ev'ryone.  
*We are one body in Christ...*  
(repeat chorus)

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### Sending and Blessing

Whether big or small, old or young, may you know yourself blessed and loved by God.  
May that love bubble in you, bubble out of you, and brighten the lives of all you meet.  
In all your relationships, in all your happenings,  
may you proclaim the presence of the way of God.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 3 July 2022, p.54*

In the name of God: Divine Mystery, Divine Word, Divine Presence,  
now and always. Amen.

Rev Kath Merrifield  
3 July 2022